

**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR.
JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, IN
RESPONSE TO THE PRESENTATION OF
THE SIERRA LEONE TARGETED REVIEW
REPORT ON UNCONSTITUTIONAL
CHANGES OF GOVERNMENT
VIRTUAL MEETING – 7TH FEBRUARY
2023**

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen:

1. Let me commend the APRM Secretariat for such a detailed and extensive Targeted Review Report on Sierra Leone. I am pleased that in the spirit of close self-scrutiny, state and non-state actors nationwide were frank and honest about their views on our progress on democratic consolidation in the two decades since the end of our civil war.

Democratic Consolidation

2. I am reminded of the quote that “Democracy is a slow process of stumbling to the right decision instead of going straight forward to the wrong one.” Sierra Leone, as the report acknowledges has made great progress in consolidating its democracy through five cycles of elections, maintaining and supporting the institutional effectiveness of government institutions, and maintaining peace, security, and stability.
3. My Government is fully committed to promoting inclusive, safe, and transparent elections. Election dates were announced a year in

advance and all matters relating to electoral justice have been speedily and transparently handled by the Supreme Court. The proportional representation slate system by which these elections will be conducted will provide an assured 30% minimum for women in parliament (up from the current 12%) and provide for representation for minority parties and independent candidate slates. More votes will mean more than they would in the winner-takes-all system. The country's security architecture is working across sectors and with development partners to ensure that everybody's right to vote is secured and every vote is counted.

4. As with peer nations struggling under the cudgel of fiscal constraints brought on by the all-encompassing global economic crisis as a consequence of the global pandemic and recent geo-political events, complete resource autonomy for the Judiciary and Parliament may be impossible in the short run. The legal framework for elections has been reviewed to make it more relevant and up to speed with international best practices.
5. With regard to the judiciary and parliament, there are a few developments worth mentioning. Both the judiciary and parliament have forged close collaborative partnerships with development partners focused on more transparency, more effectiveness, and more accessibility. The judiciary speedily disposes of matters of electoral justice, has decongested prisons, established fast track procedures, and increased access to justice to populations residing in far-to-reach areas of the country. The judiciary has leveraged the use of ICT to both speed up trials and deliver judgements on public issues. Work is ongoing on judiciary infrastructure across the country and in supporting human resource development across the sector.
6. The work of Parliament is more readily available and communicated to the public. Progressive legislation and measures that require parliamentary approval is readily handled.

Popular Uprising, militarisation and terrorism

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

7. Sierra Leone has been spared the scourge of violent extremism. Restive forces associated with political partisanship and ignited by

ceaseless social media incitement led to the August 10 incident that led to the unfortunate killings of security personnel and the death of citizens. More cooperation with development partners and more investment in implementing the new cybercrimes law may help us counter the spate of misinformation and disinformation causing unrest.

8. It should be pointed that since 2018, Sierra Leone has abolished the death penalty, repealed seditious libel laws, decongested prisons, made strong upward progress on all human rights and freedoms indicators, made huge progress in fighting corruption, protected and promoted the rights of women and the disabled, established a peace and national cohesion commission, and acceded to the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance, among others. We will continue working on those gains.

Economic Governance, Public Accountability

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. Since 2018, we have adopted an enhanced public financial management mechanism, closed off loopholes for corruption, and sustained the fight against corruption, waste, and fraud. Our progress has been acknowledged by various independent international institutions including the MCC, and Transparency International among others. There is now more transparency in resource mobilisation and expenditure and we will keep working on improving those gains.
10. With regard to mining sector, my Government conducted an aerial geophysical survey to map out our mineral resources and since then worked on a new Minerals Act that will provide more transparency in the governance of that sector. There are now more players in the mining sector and mining companies are paying more into community development funds that will benefit the various areas. It is also worth mentioning that Sierra Leone has passed the Extractives Industries Transparency International (EITI) indicators this year.
11. On the matter of local government and decentralisation, we have continued to make steady gains in that respect, and we are committed to improving service delivery across board. We are

currently working with the European Union to deepen reforms and gains in that sector while expanding public service delivery including rural electricity, water, healthcare and more.

12. Sierra Leone has made a lot of improvement in human capital development – specifically in the areas of enrolling more pupils (especially girls) in a free quality school education programme. Healthcare has improved. At the recent Dakar Summit, I stated my strong commitment to improving food security and food sufficiency. We must grow what we eat and do so in ample amounts.
13. Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, we are open to targeted reviews as these will help us improve our governance space. We remain committed to all AU Peace and Security Council recommendations on unconstitutional changes of government and we associate with the call to convene to discuss what more we can do about structural imbalances, possible causes, and other strategies and solutions for dealing with unconstitutional changes of government.

I thank you for your attention.